



A Girl Guide Leader Explains her Disability

(Extracted with permission from: *Kirby's Lane... a well traveled path*, published by Community Living Ontario, 2009, page 5.)

My name is Ruth Anne Stephenson.* I will be joining your group as one of your leaders. I am assisted by my support staff. Her name is Monica. If you have any questions that you would like to ask, please do not be shy to ask them. It is always a really good idea to ask questions because we can learn so much from each other. We can only begin to appreciate each other's wonderful qualities if we are educated about different lifestyles.

I live in a house with a roommate. We each require assistance with activities of daily living such as bathing, dressing and eating. My roommate and I both have Cerebral Palsy. We both use Para-Transit as our transportation. We both require 24-hour support so that we can live a full life. We are supported through Participation House.

If you need to ask me something, I will answer. I can respond to you with my voice. You may not understand me but Monica can help you. In time you will be just like Monica and you will be able to understand me too! It takes time and practice. I wear an apron because I drool. I cannot help this. When I eat, I use my tongue to help me chew. This may look very strange to some of you but my muscles make me eat this way. My support staff helps me eat because my hands don't work very well. When I eat, my apron can get very messy but my support staff will change it when I am finished. I can drink on my own with a straw but it sometimes makes a mess because it drips a little.

I just want all of you to know that I am just like you but I have some things that are a little different than you. I have a great sense of humour and enjoy laughing very much. I look forward to getting to know each and every one of you. I would like to thank you in advance for all your patience and kindness while I learn about each of you. Thank you to all of the leaders as well. I look forward to working alongside of you.

**Ruth Anne has been co-leader of a Girl Guide company for the past 3 years. She comes to planning meetings well prepared and is fully involved.*

